MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

May 2004

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

POWER PLANT IMPACT REVIEW

The Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) has been reviewing monitoring data and renewal permits for a number of power plants throughout the state of Massachusetts. Power plants are of concern to NOAA Fisheries due to potential impacts on fishery resources and habitats. Cooling Water Intake Structures (CWIS) associated with facilities can affect fish eggs and larvae due to entrainment and impingement. In addition, thermal effluent from power plants can impair fish migrations when located within constrained water bodies. Phase II of the Clean Water Act Section 316 (b) regulations has established standards for CWIS of large existing electric generating plants, and is currently in the process of being implemented. While National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits are issued by the US EPA, NOAA Fisheries provides conservation recommendations to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate for adverse effects on fishery resources and habitats. **(Christopher.Boelke@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9131)**

CLIPPERSHIP WHARF

The HCD met with representatives from the Clippership Wharf Project in East Boston, MA. This redevelopment project will create 400 residential units on a parcel adjacent to Boston Harbor. This project includes the placement of approximately one-acre of riprap within Boston Harbor in order to stabilize the site. In order to offset adverse effects on fishery habitat, the applicant proposes the removal of 170 creosote piles, removal of dilapidated wharves, cleanup of adjacent beaches, and the increase of capacity for East Boston's stormwater management system. As the redevelopment of the East Boston Waterfront moves forward, it is anticipated that similar projects will be proposed for this area. **(Christopher.Boelke@noaa.gov, 978-281-9131)**

MASSACHUSETTS BAY SYMPOSIUM: STATE OF THE BAYS 2004

Several members of the Habitat Conservation Division attended the Massachusetts Bay Symposium in Boston on May 6th and 7th. This symposium was the first of its kind in almost a decade. Hosted by the Massachusetts Bay Program, this symposium brought together regional coastal experts, and described current conditions and emerging issues of Massachusetts and Cape Cod Bays. Agenda topics included modeling and water quality monitoring projects occurring in the bay, the decline of a major food source for the endangered right whale in Cape Cod Bay, land use and development issues in the bay region, anadromous fish runs and invasive species. The Massachusetts Bay Program's "*State of the Bays 2004*" report was reviewed at this symposium and many of the subjects discussed are in this report. **(Marcy.Scott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9108)**

THE 19TH INTERNATIONAL COASTAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

Measure for Measure: How do we Gauge Coastal Stewardship

The 19th TCS conference was held in Newport, RI on the May 23 – 26. This very stimulating conference covered a variety of coastal issues under four main subject headings (Coastal Governance, Habitat and Ecosystem-based Management, Coastal Land Use, and Water Quality). The conference opened with a rousing plenary presentation by Dr. Jeremy Jackson of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography discussing the concept of "shifting baselines" and a "silent ocean" (a parallel to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*). This presentation made poignantly clear the loss of the large predators or "sea monsters" in our oceans, and the trophic consequences of these losses. The Pew and US Ocean Commissions' report findings were discussed in a plenary session and in regional subgroups. The conference also included a poster session, field trips, and panel discussions. Presentation subjects included ocean zoning in the Gulf of Maine, challenges and opportunities of the Cape Wind proposal, the impact and management of piers and docks, the Portfields Initiative, and information sharing among coastal managers.

(Marcy.Scott@noaa.gov , 978/ 281-9108)

NOAA RESTORATION CENTER FUNDS SURVEY TO AID TIDE GATE REMOVAL ANALYSIS

In the 1940's a tide gate was installed at the mouth of the West Branch of the Pleasant River in Addison, ME. The tide gate completely blocked tidal exchange to approximately 900 acres of tidal marsh, only allowing fresh water to flow out. Presently, the tide gate is in need of repair and the Towns of Addison and Columbia Falls have been discussing options for repairing, replacing, or removing the structure. Removal of the tide gate would restore tidal exchange and has the potential to restore estuarine functions to much of the marsh system and re-establish passage for migratory fin fish. The removal alternative, however, remains controversial. Most of the land affected by the tide gates is privately held; haying and other uses of the marsh do occur; and these interested parties are uncertain as to how their land and use of their land will be affected. More information is need to address their concerns. On May 26, Eric Hutchins of NOAA's Restoration Center and Sean McDermott of NOAA's Habitat Conservation Division traveled to Addison to discuss at a public meeting plans to survey the vegetation and create a detailed topographic map of the marsh. Information generated from this work can be used by the towns and individuals in an alternatives analysis and the decision process for addressing the broken tide gate. At the meeting, individuals from both towns expressed support for this initial work. The delineation of vegetation and topography is funded through NOAA's Restoration Center. Other groups actively involved with the Addison tide gate project include the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE).

(sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

PLEASE WELCOME OUR HCD INTERNS

The Habitat Protection Division welcomes two summer interns, Eileen Marum and Hajure Fontaine. Eileen is a student at Smith College and is a repeat intern. As a resident of Mattapoisett, Eileen has become acutely interested in oil spill contamination of marine habitat. She is also working on various research projects for the Region and is scheduled for her second scallop cruise on the Albatross. Hajure Fontaine is a student from Bowie State University and majors in computer technology with an emphasis on how humans adapt to technology. She will be evaluating a collaborative website set up as a workspace for work on habitat economics and may be involved in web design as well. We're pleased to have these two enthusiastic students on board and look forward to their work products.

(Kathi.Rodrigues@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9324)

US AND CANADA REGIONAL HABITAT WORKSHOP

On May 13 – 14 representatives from the Northeast Region's Habitat Conservation Division met with their Canadian counterparts to share information on issues facing habitat programs in the Gulf of Maine

Region. The objective of the workshop was to further efforts to establish a framework for collaboration between Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Northeast Regional office of NOAA Fisheries that could achieve mutual benefits to habitat programs. The two day meeting began with each side giving presentations on topics ranging from deepwater corals, marine protected areas, review processes for development projects, as well as science and research needs. After discussing several possibilities, the consensus of the meeting was to collaborate on a guide or comparison of criteria used by each country to identify sensitive habitats. **(Kathi.Rodrigues@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9324)**

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

MEADOWLANDS INTERAGENCY MITIGATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MIMAC)

The monthly MIMAC meeting included a presentation by those involved in the Honeywell site clean up in Jersey City, NJ. The meeting was attended by former Senator Robert Torricelli, the court-appointed special master for the clean up, and the consultants for the special master as well as Honeywell and W.R. Grace and their consultants. An update of the progress of the remedial action design was presented to the agencies for feedback. Additional coordination will occur as the plans for the site become finalized. No permit applications have been filed with the ACOE or the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) yet. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

PORT JERSEY CHANNEL HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

New Jersey Department of Transportation's Office of Maritime Resources (OMR) will be submitting a permit application to deepen the Port Jersey Channel to -50 feet below mean low water. The project is described in the ACOE overall harbor deepening project. As part of the deepening of the channel, a dogleg at the channel's eastern end will be dredged to allow container vessels to enter the channel safely. This will result in the removal of about 12 acres of sublittoral habitat known as the Jersey Flats. The Jersey Flats have been documented as an important winter flounder spawning habitat in the harbor. To address resource agencies' concerns about the impact of the project on the Jersey Flats, the ACOE and OMR have developed a habitat restoration plan that will use clean sediments dredged from the Port Jersey Channel and Jersey Flats to restore a previously deepened area to depths comparable to the existing depths at the Jersey Flats. After evaluating several potential sites in the area, the ACOE selected the unused navigation channel on the south side of the former Military Ocean Terminal-Bayonne located just south of the Port Jersey Channel. This type of habitat restoration has not been done before in the New York-New Jersey Harbor area. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

HOBOKEN PIER C WATERFRONT PARK

HCD staff reviewed a permit application by the City of Hoboken to construct a public waterfront park in the Hudson River in Hoboken, Hudson County, NJ. As proposed, the park will consist of a new 99,000 square foot irregularly shaped, concrete slab pier containing a pavilion, equipment room, restrooms, playgrounds, volley ball court/ice skating rink, and seating and dining areas. A 230-foot-long by eight-foot-wide pile supported walkway would connect the southern portion of the pier to the existing bulkheaded shore. An additional 20-foot-wide by 700-foot-long pile supported "fishing pier" would extend from the bulkhead to the northern portion of the pier and continue waterward to a seasonally moored 80-foot by 262-foot long floating barge containing a swimming pool, dining area, locker rooms, and showers. A pier existed on the site in the past, but was removed completely in 2001 by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. HCD has provided the ACOE with written comments on the public notice and essential fish habitat (EFH) assessment for the project pursuant to Section 305(b)(4)(A) of the MSA and Part IV, Paragraph 3(b) of the MOA between our agencies. Our concerns focus on the

adverse impacts on EFH due to the shading effects of the large pile supported structure, the non-water dependent nature of the project and the lack of an alternatives analysis, documentation of avoidance and minimization, and compensatory mitigation for all unavoidable impacts as required under the Clean Water Act 404 (b)(1) Guidelines. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

NEW JERSEY COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM REVIEW
The Coastal Zone Management Act requires the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to review periodically New Jersey=s implementation of its federally approved Coastal Management Program (NJCMP) to evaluate adherence to the terms of its federal financial assistance awards. HCD staff was invited to meet with representatives of NOAA's Office of Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) to discuss our perspective on the NJCMP and its implementation. HCD staff explained how we interact with the New Jersey program, responded to questions from OCRM and discussed what we perceived as the strengths and weaknesses of the existing program. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

ASIAN OYSTERS IN CHESAPEAKE BAY
HCD staff, with assistance from HQ, the Chesapeake Bay Office, and the Oxford Cooperative Laboratory, continued reviewing a proposal by the Virginia Seafood Council (VSC) to revise the existing Department of the Army (Norfolk District) permit which allows the monitored, experimental introduction of sterile Suminoe oysters (*Crassostrea ariakensis*) into ten select aquaculture locations in Chesapeake Bay. The existing permit allows the introduced oysters to remain in these waters no longer than June 30, 2004, based on concerns of shellfish biologists that a sufficient number of sterile oysters would revert to a fertile stage when bay waters become warmer and produce enough progeny to establish a viable population of these non-native oysters. The VSC requested that the permit be revised to allow the oysters to remain at the aquaculture sites until April, 2005. Although NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Region, submitted a letter to the Norfolk District recommending that the permit extension not be issued, NOAA staff have continued to meet with other agencies and representatives of the VSC to develop permit conditions which will reduce the risk of non-native oyster spawning and spat production. **(Stanley.W.Gorski@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3037; Jamie King, 410/ 267-5655; Fred Kern, 410/ 226-5193)**

NEW YORK DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS CIVIL WORKS REVIEW
On May 27 staff from the New York District's Environmental Branch, including Jenine Gallo and Ron Pinzon, visited Sandy Hook to meet with HCD and NEFSC staff to summarize the District's civil works plans for New York Harbor and for the Hudson Raritan Estuary. Part of the discussion also centered on studies that the NEFSC could undertake through and in support of the civil works program. **(Stanley.W.Gorski@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3037; Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

ESTUARY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EEPAC) MEETING
HCD staff attended the June 3, 2004 EEPAC meeting. The advisory committee was formed as part of the conditions of PSEG's Salem Generating Station NJPDES Permit. The enhancement program is restoring purchased wetlands and is increasing anadromous fish habitat by providing fish ladders which may increase fish populations impacted by the station's activities.

A report was given on the Multi-Sensory Hybrid Intake Protection Technology (MSHIPT), which investigates the use of strobe lights, air bubbles, and sound as potential behavioral deterrents that can be used as a means to minimize impacts on aquatic organisms due to impingement or entrainment at the Salem Cooling Water Intake Structure (CWIS). Tests will be conducted in Sunken Ship Cove on the Delaware River in Salem, NJ, using sonic and ultrasonic signals as a behavioral deterrent.

A report was given on the Improved Biological Monitoring Work Plan (IBMWP) which is an expansion of estuarine monitoring and is intended to provide data on populations of finfish potentially impacted by the station's operation. A study was conducted to survey three gear types- bottom trawl, pelagic trawl, and beach seine - to assess the relative distribution and abundance of target species relative to these gear types. Also, gear efficiencies for towed ichthyoplankton sampling was investigated as part of the ichthyoplankton abundance monitoring program, with respect to egg and larval fish retention.

Other topics of discussion included an update to the balanced indigenous community analysis, a Salem Station's detritus data review, the 2003 Fish Ladder Pilot Mark/Recapture Results, a latent impingement mortality update, and a test area data evaluation for 2004 restoration activities with a restoration success poster session. **(Anita.Riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116**

CROWN LANDING/LOGAN LATERAL, DELAWARE RIVER

Habitat staff attended a scoping meeting for a proposed liquified natural gas (LNG) terminal in Logan Township, NJ on the Delaware River. The proposed project would berth an LNG cargo vessel, treat LNG, and then transfer natural gas to a pipeline for distribution. The terminal would involve approximately 22 acres, 12.74 acres of which is shallow water habitat that would be converted to 40 feet deep by hydraulic dredging. The 30" diameter pipeline would be installed 50-100 feet under the Delaware River bottom by directional drilling.

The Mid-Atlantic states were named as an area where the LNG facility should be located because of the needs of the area. Important to the siting was the terminal facility criteria, connections to national pipelines, and engineering, environmental, and economic factors. The following were used to select the Logan Township site: safety (need a thermal exclusion and vapor exclusion zone), parcel size and shape, shipping conflicts, population, zoning and land use, the Endangered Species Act, pipeline connection for delivery, power source adequate roads, dredged material disposal, public lands, expanse of wetlands and economic considerations such as pipeline length, pier length, and cryogenic pipeline.

The project site crosses two state jurisdictions; Delaware and New Jersey. The terminal would be on land in New Jersey but the berthing and transfer systems (on the water) would be in Delaware waters.

Species of concern to NMFS that may be impacted by the loss of shallow water habitat include the endangered shortnose sturgeon, American shad, striped bass, alewife, and blueback herring. **(Anita.Riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)**

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BRIDGE REMOVAL PROJECT MAY SUPPLEMENT RHODE ISLAND ARTIFICIAL REEFS

The old Jamestown Bridge is being considered as possible structure materials for several artificial reef sites in Rhode Island. The old bridge was replaced in 1992, but what and how to deal with the old bridge has been the subject of three National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) actions and protracted consideration of untold numbers of options. In the latest iteration of discussion, based on the supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) issued in December of 2003, Rhode Island Department of Transportation (DOT) is seeking both nearshore (<30 meters of water) and offshore (>30

meters of water) sites where environmental benefits can be accrued to the residents of Rhode Island. The sites under consideration are in close proximity to areas blessed with natural topographic relief on the seafloor. Enhancing these sites without diminishing the existing resources and the habitat's functions and values is the challenge that the DOT has undertaken in cooperation with members of the Department of Environmental Management Fisheries unit. Recreational and commercial fishermen would be expected to benefit from the placement. **(Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

EPA RELEASES DEIS FOR POTENTIAL DREDGED MATERIAL DISPOSAL SITES

The draft EIS regarding the potential designation of one or more openwater dredged material disposal sites in Rhode Island Sound has ben released by the US EPA. The document describes how two potential sites were identified and researched and presents the available information. The investigations built on the body of information developed and still being collected for the disposal site for the Providence River Federal Navigation Maintenance Dredging Project for Site "W" and relied on the collected investigations of all sectors to describe Site "E." The existing information was supplemented in several situations with focused studies of the site and the resources using them. In the end, the existing Providence River disposal site, presently known as 69(b), has several attributes that make it the better option. The NMFS review continues and we are a cooperating agency in the development of the EIS. Both roles have enabled us to insure that the aquatic resources and their habitats are fully described and the potential consequences of use of either site are appreciated. **(Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

HYDROPOWER PROJECT CONTEMPLATED FOR EAST RIVER

The New York District, ACOE recently issued a Public Notice for an application by Verdant Power to construct a six turbine demonstration project to assess the efficiency of the turbines relative to their position in the water and also on marine life. The project entails installing pile mounted turbines, electric transmission cables, and attendant fill in the east branch of the East River at Roosevelt Island, Borough of Manhattan, New York County, NY. The six turbines are expected to generate 100-150 kilowatts of electricity generated by tidal flows. This demonstration project is in anticipation of an upcoming application to install several hundred more units in an approximately 33 acre generating field along the east shore of Roosevelt Island. Staff at the Milford Field Office is reviewing the Public Notice and its accompanying EFH assessment and will provide comments in June. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-7504)**

NEW YORK CITY DEP PLANS EXPLORATORY STUDY IN HUDSON RIVER

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Bureau of Environmental Engineering is planning on conducting an exploratory drilling and sub-bottom testing project in the Hudson River near Wappinger Falls and Newburgh, New York. The investigation entails drilling up to ten test borings to determine the location for three temporary test wells and three observation wells installed in the Hudson River to assess the feasibility for future water withdrawals from an aquifer beneath the Hudson River. Milford Field Office staff is reviewing the project under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and will provide comments accordingly. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-7504)**

DREDGING PROJECT PROPOSED IN FRESH KILLS

The New York City Department of Sanitation proposes to dredge approximately 54,000 cubic yards of fine silt from Fresh Kills with subsequent disposal at the Fresh Kills Landfill. Material would be extracted using a closed (environmental) bucket without barge overflow. The material would be placed into a decant barge and allowed to settle before water is discharged back into Fresh Kills. A ten year permit, with future maintenance options, is proposed. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-7504)**

CROSS HARBOR FREIGHT TUNNEL UPDATE

A DEIS for the Cross Harbor Freight Tunnel has been released and the comment period extended into September, 2004. This DEIS describes a project under consideration by the New York City Economic Development Corporation to construct a tunnel connecting existing freight rail facilities in New Jersey with existing and proposed freight handling facilities east of the Hudson River. Staff from the Sandy Hook and Milford Field Offices will review and comment on the proposal. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023; Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-7504)**

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SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION (SAV) RESTORTION IN CHESAPEAKE BAY

Maryland Department of Natural Resources and VIMS will be working together towards restoring 1,000 acres of SAV by 2010, the goal set by the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. This spring, an investigation is being launched of a new technique for large-scale eelgrass restoration that focuses on collecting large numbers of seeds and eliminating many laborious steps in the handling and storage of seeds prior to distribution. This approach should allow distribution of sufficient quantities of eelgrass seeds to begin the restoration of tens to hundreds of acres of SAV in calendar year 2004.

Seeds will be harvested this spring using a mechanical harvesting boat. The boat has an adjustable cutting blade that will allow us to harvest only the tops of the plants with the reproductive shoots, leaving the roots and most of the vegetative material in place. Mechanizing seed harvesting facilitates the collection of the large quantities of seeds needed for large-scale restoration.

Immediately following collection, approximately 1/2 of the seeds, most still held within reproductive shoots, will be placed into mesh bags attached to floats. As seeds finish development and are released, they drop through the mesh to the sediment below. From past research it has been learned that seeds settle rapidly to the sediment surface where they are incorporated into the sediment and thus do not move far from their initial settling location. Approximately 5,000 bags will be deployed, split between three planting areas. The other 1/2 of the seeds will be stored in Piney Point Aquaculture Facility where seeds will be released into large tanks and stored through the summer, and will be deployed in various ways, including through the use of a seed distribution boat designed to allow planting of approximately 12 acres/hour.

During the course of the restoration effort, several specific research questions will be addressed, including: 1) what are the effects of harvesting on the parent beds, 2) what is the most efficient and cost-effective way to distribute large numbers of eelgrass seeds, 3) what is the most effective way to store eelgrass seeds through the summer, and 4) how effective is large-scale eelgrass seeding? **(Tim.Goodger@noaa.gov, 410/ 226-5606)**

BOTTOM HILLS DRAIN RESTORATION

Discussions have been initiated to evaluate approaches to restore the ecological character of an area of Indian River Bay, Delaware, known as Bottom Hills Drain. The area was dredged historically to provide sand to replenish the barrier beach adjacent to Indian River Inlet and protect the structural integrity of the bridge spanning the inlet. Several hundreds of acres have been deepened from an average depth of three feet to an average depth of 15 feet, with some areas exceeding 20 feet. The area stratifies and becomes hypoxic in warmer months. **(Tim.Goodger@noaa.gov, 410/ 226-5606)**